

Historic and Cultural Resources

The City's bicentennial year, 2005, serves to remind us of the importance of the City's rich heritage, which continues to provide a sense of identity, stability and continuity.

Historic and Archaeological Resources

The City's inventory of historic resources reflects the interplay of local growth patterns, public policies and private actions and continuing identification efforts. The majority of historic architectural resources are concentrated in Old Town Fairfax, the traditional core of the City. However, surveys conducted by the City since the late 1970s have identified a wide range of resources throughout the City, including commercial, institutional and residential structures, buildings and objects (see Map HSR-1). Over 110 buildings and structures have been surveyed and documented, as well as four cemeteries and one archaeological site. A citywide archaeological reconnaissance survey completed in early 1994 identified areas of high, medium and low potential for archaeological significance (see Map HSR-2).

Among the City's most significant historic properties are a group of nineteenth and early twentieth century structures in the National Register Old and Historic District within Old Town Fairfax. By contrast, the Tastee 29 Diner, located on Lee Highway, erected in 1940, is nationally significant as an excellent example of "streamline moderne" roadside architecture. The Lee Highway corridor retains some excellent surviving examples of the architecture of the mid 20th Century. Significant properties also include a few surviving examples of large rural estates (Farr and Blenheim), Fairfax Cemetery, Sisson House, Manassas Gap Railroad Bed as well as a grouping of twenty-three historic residential properties in the Fairfax Triangle area, predominantly along Chain Bridge Road and Cedar Avenue. The City also contains the Jermantown Cemetery, one of the few remaining African-American historical sites in the area.

Recognition and Preservation of Historic Properties

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 and subsequent amendments to NHPA created the National Register of Historic Places to recognize properties of local, state and national significance. The National Register designation is an honorary recognition of the architectural and historical significance of buildings, structures, archaeological sites, monuments or districts. It imposes no architectural controls or property restrictions unless Federal funds or actions are involved, triggering review of potential impacts. However, qualifying property owners are eligible for Federal investment tax credits (possibly as much as 15-20 percent of rehabilitation costs) for the proper rehabilitation of individually recognized properties that contribute to National Register Districts.

The City has one National Register district, the Old and Historic Fairfax District, and four individual properties on the National Register: the Fairfax Public School (now the Fairfax Museum and Visitors Center), the Ratcliffe-Allison House on Main Street, Blenheim, and the Tastee 29 Diner on Lee Highway (see Map HSR-3). In addition to the National Register Designation, these historic properties are listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register.

Within the City's National Register Old & Historic District, there are 52 buildings, 10 other structures and a monument, most of which are classified as "contributing" elements. Six of those buildings predate 1850, 14 were constructed around the turn of the 20th century and an additional 12 date from the 1920s and early 1930s. Approximately three-fourths of the buildings in the district are used for commercial purposes. Among the most notable historic buildings in Old Town Fairfax are the Fairfax County Courthouse, the William Gunnell House, the Ratcliffe-Allison House, Old Town Hall and the Ford Building. Many of the other downtown historic structures are former residences that have been converted into office or retail space.

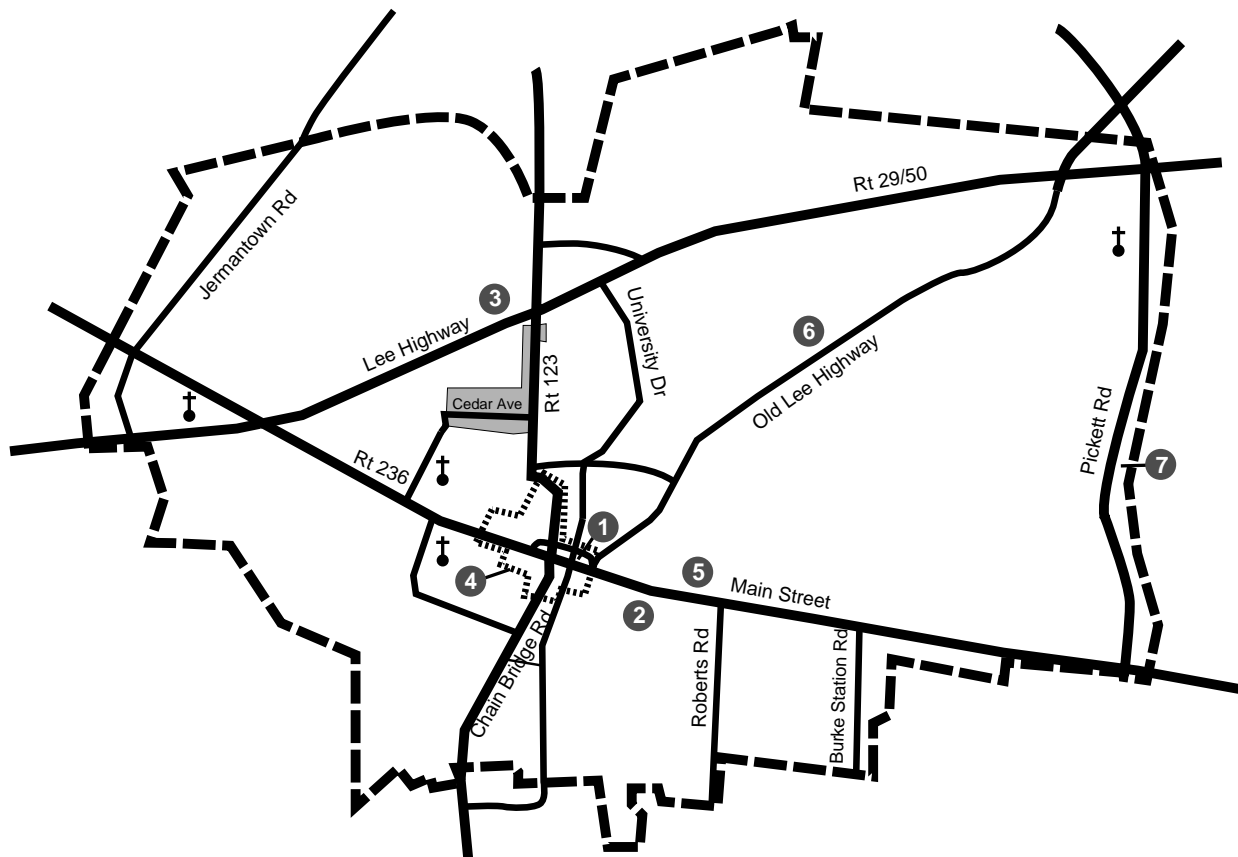
Overlay historic district zoning is the primary tool available to the City for the local regulatory protection of historic prop-

erties. A district may be composed of many properties or may be a single property. There are currently three local overlay districts within the City: Old Town Fairfax, which substantially overlaps the National Register Old and Historic District, the Fairfax Public School Historic District, which overlays the current Fairfax Museum and Visitors Center property, and the Blenheim Historic District, which includes 12 acres around the Blenheim house. Historic overlay zoning imposes special bulk, area and use restrictions and design controls on structures and sites. Within these districts, all proposed alterations, demolitions and new construction must be reviewed and approved by the City's Board of Architectural Review. In addition to these existing districts, the City should decide if there are any

smaller pockets of historic properties that are worth designating as historic areas. Some of the housing areas near Chain Bridge Road north of Old Town could possibly qualify for such a designation.

In addition to the designation of overlay districts, the City can also attempt to preserve its built heritage through the careful selection of structures to be designated as historic properties. As time passes, additional properties within the City, such as turn of the twentieth century residences, will also become eligible for historic designation. Several of these structures also have ties to the lands of their original large-lot estates, which should be preserved along with the structure, if at all possible. The City should monitor the age and status of

Map HSR-1
Surveyed Historic Sites



National Register Sites

- ① Ratcliffe-Allison House
- ② Fairfax Public School
- ③ Tastee 29 Diner
- ④ Old Town Historic District

Other Sites

- ⑤ Farr Property
- ⑥ Blenheim
- ⑦ Krasnow Property

- † Surveyed Cemeteries
- Cedar Avenue Historic Area
- Old Town Historic District Boundary

these properties, making efforts to attain historic designations for deserving structures whenever appropriate.

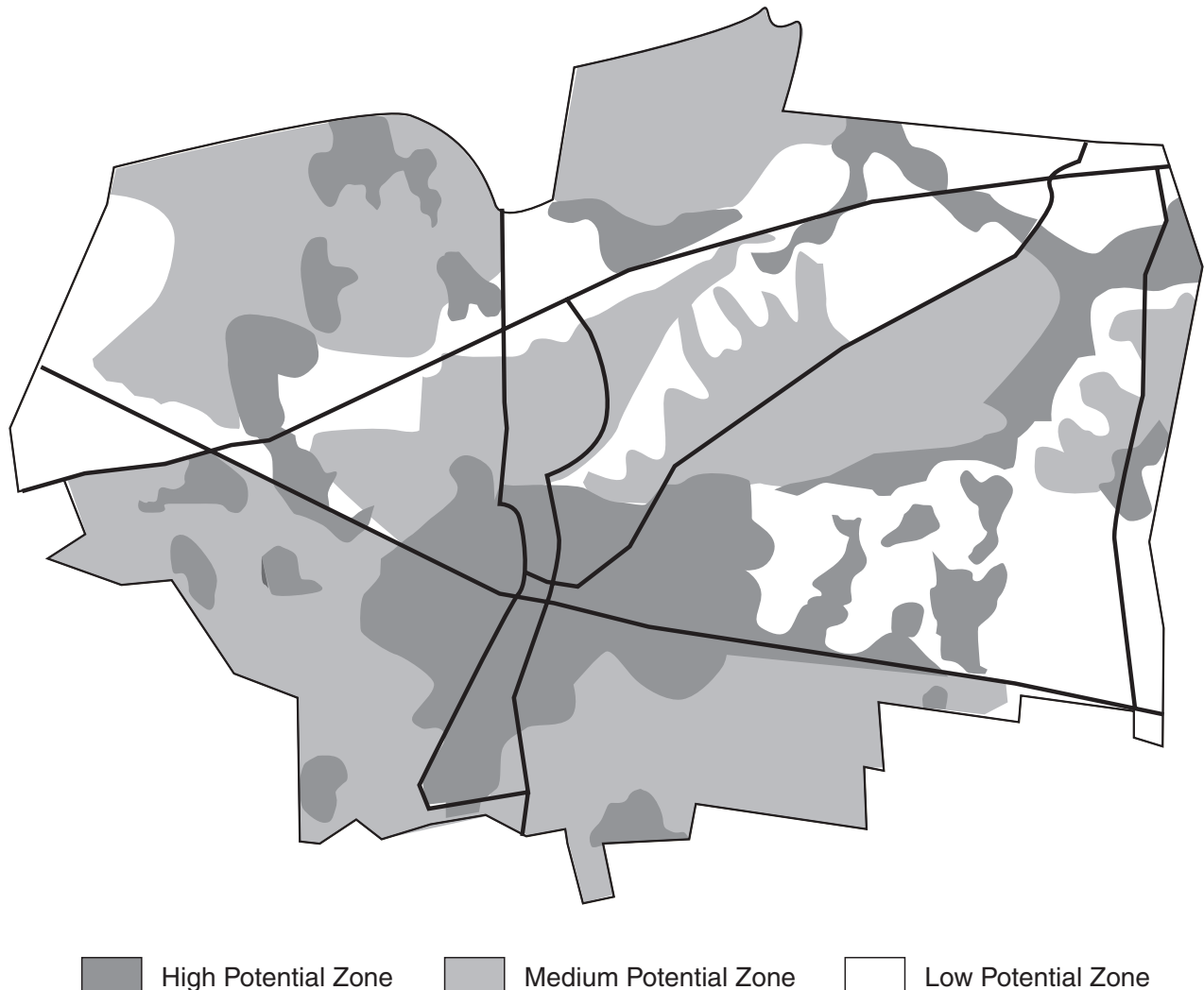
The *Design Guidelines—Old Town Fairfax Historic and Transition Districts* is used by the Board of Architectural Review to evaluate proposals for rehabilitation of existing structures and construction of new buildings in the City's historic districts and the Transition Overlay District. In addition to providing guidelines for building and building features, landscaping and signs, the *Guidelines* reviews historic patterns of development in the City and offer a concise design profile of the City's Old Town Fairfax historic district. The variety of architectural styles and building features that create the char-

acter of the Old Town Fairfax district are described in detail in *Design Guidelines*.

Partners in Preservation

Amendments to the National Historic Preservation Act adopted in 1980 served to substantially decentralize Federal historic preservation programs and provide more involvement for local governments in National Register nominations, environmental reviews and funding for local historic preservation activities. The Certified Local Government program was designed to bring qualified local governments into full partnership with state and Federal agencies in reviewing National Register nomi-

Map HSR-2
Potential Archaeological Resource Areas

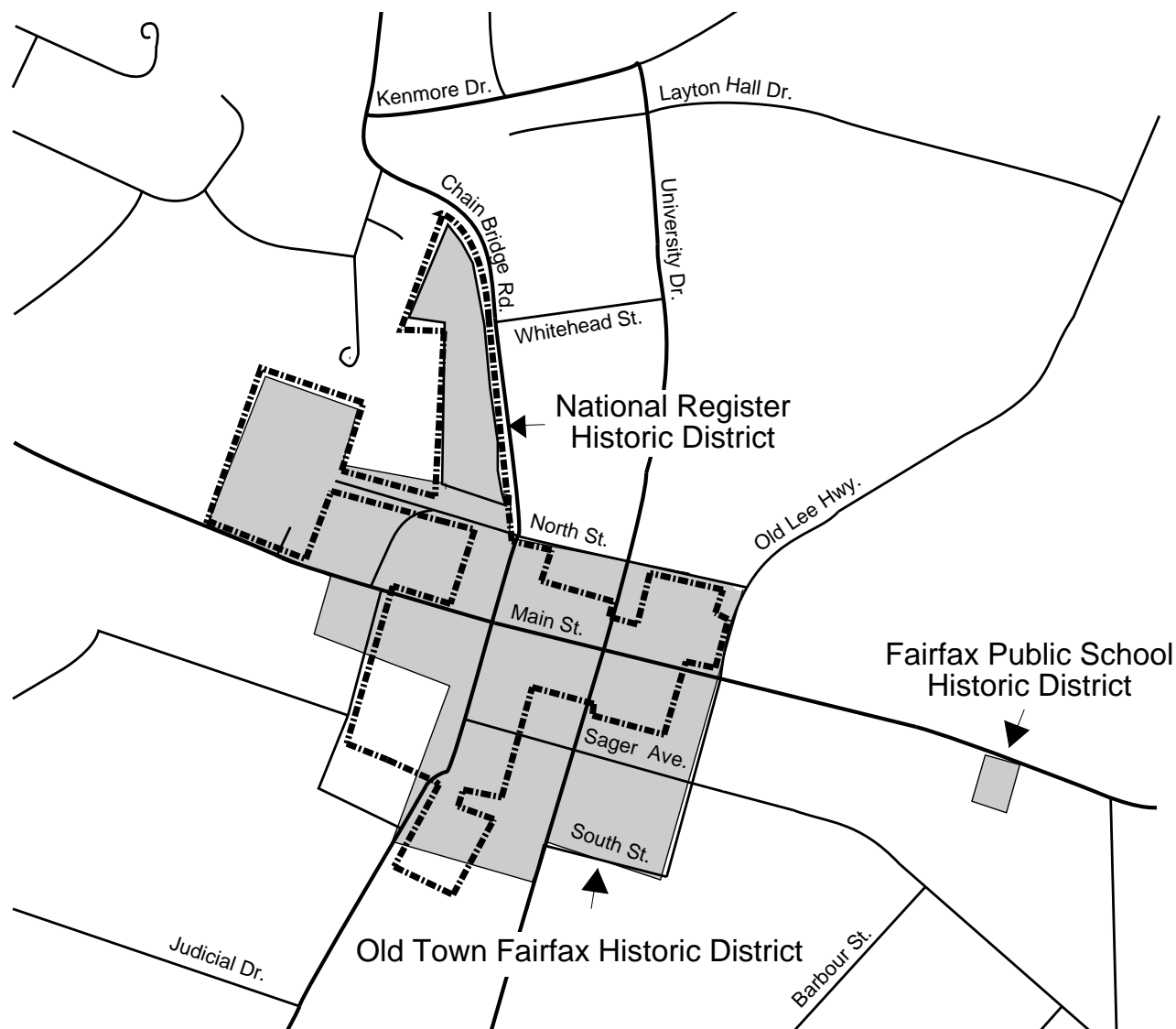


nations and to serve as a source of specially earmarked funds. The historic resources program in the City of Fairfax has grown over the years from a totally volunteer part-time staff to now include several paid staff positions and a full-time Director of Historic Resources.

The City of Fairfax became a Certified Local Government (CLG) in 1991 after the State Historic Preservation Office determined that the City's Board of Architectural Review and local historic preservation program met state and federal standards. Only 25 local governments throughout the State had attained CLG status as of May 2003. Annually 10 percent of a state's

funding from the National Historic Preservation Fund must be passed along to CLGs. In each of the first three years as a CLG, the City competed for and received grants from this special funding set-aside. The first grant was used to hire a consultant to prepare successful National Register nominations for the Fairfax Public School and Tastee 29 Diner. The second grant funded a consultant to prepare the Old Town Fairfax Design Guidelines, which were adopted by the City Council in June 1993. A citywide archaeological reconnaissance survey, the topic of the third grant project, was completed in June 1994. More recently the City received a grant for a consultant to prepare the National Register of Historic Places nomination for

Map HSR-3 Old Town Fairfax Historic Districts



Source: City of Fairfax CDP

Blenheim. The result of this process was that Blenheim was added to the register. In 2003 the City received another grant to update the citywide survey in 2003 and 2004.

Key to a successful historic preservation program in the City is a strong local network of organizations interested in the preservation of the City's heritage. These organizations included Historic Fairfax City, Inc., the Central Fairfax Chamber of Commerce, the Old Town Fairfax Business Association, the Woman's Club of Fairfax and the Fairfax Ferns Garden Club.

Historic Fairfax City, Inc. (HFCI) is a non-profit organization incorporated in 1983 with the purpose of promoting and pre-

serving historic properties and increasing public appreciation and awareness of the history of the City and the surrounding area. HFCI acts in an advisory role to the City Council on historic preservation and has partnered with the City in historic restorations through private fundraising efforts.

Through museum activities, special local tours, public meetings and presentations, HFCI further contributes a valuable educational service to City residents and the entire Northern Virginia community. HFCI has been instrumental in the restoration of key historic properties including the Ratcliffe-Allison House, Old Town Hall and the Fairfax Museum and Visitors Center.

Historic and Cultural Resources—Goal, Objective & Strategies

Goal: Protect and enhance the City's historic and cultural resources for present and future residents.

Objective HR-1 Preserve and promote the City's historic resources.

Strategies

HR-1.1 Support the efforts of private individuals, businesses and groups in preserving, maintaining, and rehabilitating historic sites and structures.

The City should continue to maintain an effective partnership with Historic Fairfax City Inc., the Downtown Fairfax Coalition, Women's and Garden Clubs and similar organizations to preserve and maintain City-owned historic properties. The City should also serve as a repository of technical information and assistance for maintenance and rehabilitation of historic structures that are privately owned.

The City should ensure that all publicly owned historic properties are affirmatively maintained and respectfully rehabilitated. Stewardship of City-owned historic resources should be planned and provided for through the Capital Improvement Program process. The City should also encourage private owners of historic properties to take appropriate maintenance measures and rehabilitate properties according to the federal Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

HR-1.2 Promote greater public awareness of the City's historic resources.

The City's historic heritage should be made accessible through a variety of ways, including: periodic special events (e.g. Civil War Weekend, Historic Homes Tours), supplemental programming contributions to annual City events (e.g. July 4, Fall Festival, Festival of Lights and Carols, Spotlight on the Arts), the City's bicentennial celebration in 2005, ongoing SOL-based school programs, seasonal walking tours, media programs produced by City cable television staff, presentations to civic and other groups, visitor information packet mailings, brochures, and the City Web site.

HR-1.3 Discourage demolition or inappropriate use of valuable historic resources.

Where appropriate, the City should provide regulatory protection for threatened properties through historic district overlay zoning. During new development or re-development activities, proffers should be sought that document and protect historic resources. Respectful adaptive reuse of historic properties should be encouraged.

HR-1.4 Identify and recruit appropriate users for the City's historic buildings.

With the departure of the core of Fairfax County government from the Massey Complex and leased properties in and near Old Town Fairfax, the revitalization of the City's core is an important component of economic development of the City as a whole. Through its Economic Development Office, the City should actively seek to attract businesses to Old Town Fairfax that will revitalize the downtown area and showcase the City's heritage.

HR-1.5 Maintain and update surveys of the City's architectural resources.

Initial surveys of the City's historic resources have been completed. Some of the properties in the National Register Old and Historic District that were noncontributing because they were not yet 50 years old will soon be eligible for conversion to "contributing" status and therefore eligible for federal tax incentives. Regular updating of these surveys is important, since many more properties are approaching 50 years of age. Updates should include City-owned properties or those affiliated with the City in various ways (e.g. Barker House, Ratcliffe Cemetery).

HR-1.6 Design an archaeological preservation program based on a City-wide archaeological assessment.

One of the City's commitments as a Certified Local Government is to actively address assessment and preservation of its archaeological resources. A citywide

archaeological reconnaissance survey completed in early 1994 identified areas of low, medium and high archaeological potential. The City should actively seek further studies and more in-depth surveys of high potential areas through development proffers, staff and volunteer research efforts, and grant-supported projects.

HR-1.7 Maintain an effective partnership with state and federal agencies for historic preservation activities.

The City's status as a Certified Local Government is dependent on maintenance of an ongoing historic preservation program with a qualified Board of Architectural Review (BAR). Members of the BAR should seek annual training opportunities to meet CLG requirements. City staff members should effectively perform all CLG-required activities including submission of an annual report to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, review of all federally-mandated environmental assessments related to historic preservation, coordinate with the BAR to review all National Register nominations from the City, and administer all CLG grant projects.

HR-1.8 Seek National Register nomination of additional historic resources, as appropriate.

The City should support individual property owners in seeking National Register designation for their properties. In addition, the City should initiate designation for publicly held properties, as appropriate. Examples of sites that may now or soon meet the designation criteria include Paul VI High School (formerly Fairfax High School), the Farr property, Blenheim, the Sisson House (currently used for School Board and Voter Registrar offices) on the City Hall grounds, and a potential residential historic district in the Fairfax Triangle area.

HR-1.9 Seek additional sources of funding and technical assistance for historic preservation activities.

The City should continue to explore participation in the Main Street program to obtain funding and technical assistance for revitalization and rehabilitation of historic properties in Old Town Fairfax. In addition, new federal funding opportunities under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) offer the potential for funding historic preservation activities along major transportation routes such as Main Street and Chain Bridge Road in the City.

HR-1.10 Incorporate historic preservation as an integral component of Old Town redevelopment plans.

Downtown redevelopment will dramatically impact the National Register Historic District. Redevelopment concepts and plans should be reviewed to ensure the retention of historic buildings, features and landscape elements that contribute to our downtown historic districts. Aspects including scale, compatibility and historic sightlines and viewsheds should be considered in all

redevelopment plans. Adequate archaeological investigations should be executed prior to the redevelopment of particular parcels.

HR-1.11 Stabilize Blenheim and complete its rehabilitation as a key City historic site.

Blenheim is a National Register-listed property containing the nation's best examples of Civil War soldier inscriptions and photographs left on house walls. Its 12-acre parcel also contributes to the preservation of open Space within the City. The master plan for this site should be implemented to ensure stabilization and conservation of this valuable resource, as well as provide interpretation for local citizens and as a key element of the City's heritage tourism initiative.

HR-1.12 Inventory City museum collections and ensure their conservation

City collections contain a limited number of historic photographs, manuscripts, textiles, furniture and other objects related to City and regional history. A collections management plan should be completed and updated for these items and adequate conservation measures and storage facilities should be provided.

HR-1.13 Contribute to the City's tourism initiatives

City heritage is a primary reason visitors come to Fairfax. The Office of Historic Resources should continue to participate in these initiatives through collaboration with other City offices and local and regional players, including the Office of Economic Development, Central Fairfax Chamber of Commerce, Virginia Civil War Trails, and the Virginia Tourism Corporation. The Fairfax Museum and Visitors Center should continue to be promoted as a key destination and starting point for visitors and tourists. The Museum and Visitor Center should be adequately supported to provide a positive initial experience for outside visitors and also serve as a local information center for area residents.

The City's bicentennial, which will take place in 2005, presents an opportunity for the promotion of the City's historic resources. A special promotion campaign and key events should be created to both bring visitors to the City and promote its historic status.